

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please substitute the following claims for the same-numbered claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of trading goods and services in an online market, ~~the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying initial requirements for initiating trading in the online market,~~ the method comprising:

specifying, by a user, initial requirements for initiating trading among trading parties in said online market;

executing a multi-party trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user,

wherein the multi-party trading mechanism comprises one of a continuous double auction, a call market, an ascending price auction, a descending price auction, a first price sealed bid auction, a uniform second price auction, and a reverse auction conducted by the user and the trading parties;

selecting a first trading offer from the trading offers of said multi-party trading mechanism;

~~if a first trading offer is not selected,~~ invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the multi-party trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties who submitted trading offers;

repeating said executing of said multi-party trading mechanism, and either said selecting of said trading offers of said multi-party trading mechanism or said invoking said standalone bilateral negotiations to obtain either said attractive and feasible trading offer offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or said customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations, respectively;

evaluating the attractive and feasible offer offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or the customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations by [[a]] any of a

utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, a user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and a user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

concluding trading deals based on ~~[[the]]~~ evaluated attractive and feasible ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or the customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations, whereby said multi-party trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

2. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 1, ~~all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference~~, wherein the invoking the standalone bilateral negotiations comprises:

agreeing upon a protocol for conducting the standalone negotiations;

exchanging offers as per the agreed upon protocol; and

concluding the standalone negotiations as per the agreed upon protocol.

3. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 2, ~~all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference~~, wherein the ~~step of~~ exchanging offers comprises ~~the steps of~~:

receiving offers from the trading parties;

evaluating the received offers;

generating counter-offers on ~~[[the]]~~ a basis of evaluated offers;

sending counter-offers to the trading parties; and

repeating said receiving, said evaluating, said generating and said sending in accordance with the agreed upon protocol.

4. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 1, ~~all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference~~, wherein the online market is a regulated online market, the online market being regulated to increase trading efficiency of the online market, the trading efficiency of the online market being governed by ~~[[the]]~~ a number of trading parties that strike a trading deal.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended) A method of trading in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, ~~each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying thereof requirements for initiating trading in the online market,~~ the method comprising:

specifying, by a user, initial requirements for initiating trading among trading parties in said online market;

executing a multi-party trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user,

wherein the multi-party trading mechanism comprises one of a continuous double auction, a call market, an ascending price auction, a descending price auction, a first price sealed bid auction, a uniform second price auction, and a reverse auction conducted by the user and the trading parties;

selecting a first trading offer from the trading offers of said multi-party trading mechanism;

~~if a first trading offer is not selected,~~ invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the multi-party trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties who submitted trading offers, said invoking further comprising:

agreeing upon a protocol for conducting the standalone negotiations;

exchanging offers as per the agreed upon protocol; and

concluding the standalone negotiations as per the agreed upon protocol;

repeating said executing of said multi-party trading mechanism, and either said selecting of said trading offers of said multi-party trading mechanism or said invoking said standalone bilateral negotiations to obtain either ~~said~~ attractive and feasible trading ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or said customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations, respectively;

evaluating the attractive and feasible ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or the customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations by ~~[[a]]~~ any of a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, a user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and a user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

concluding trading deals based on ~~[[the]]~~ evaluated attractive and feasible ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or the customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations, whereby said multi-party trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

7. (Currently Amended) An online computer system suitable for trading goods and services in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, ~~the system connected to a plurality of clients, the user specifying initial requirements for initiating trading in the online market using a client,~~ the ~~online computer~~ system comprising:

means for specifying, by said user, initial requirements for initiating trading among trading parties in said online market;

~~a server for enabling the trading in the online market, the server comprising:~~

means for executing a multi-party trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user,

wherein the multi-party trading mechanism comprises one of a continuous double auction, a call market, an ascending price auction, a descending price auction, a first price sealed bid auction, a uniform second price auction, and a reverse auction conducted by the user and the trading parties;

means for selecting a first trading offer from the trading offers;

~~if a first trading offer is not selected,~~ means for invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the multi-party trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties who submitted trading offers;

means for repeating said executing of said multi-party trading mechanism, and either said selecting of said trading offers of said multi-party trading mechanism or said invoking said standalone bilateral negotiations to obtain either attractive and feasible trading offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or said customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations, respectively;

means for evaluating the attractive and feasible ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or the customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations by ~~[[a]]~~ any of a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, a user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and a user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

means for concluding trading deals based on ~~[[the]]~~ evaluated attractive and feasible ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or the customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations, whereby said multi-party trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

8. (Currently Amended) The system as recited in claim 7, ~~all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference~~, wherein the ~~server~~ means for executing a trading mechanism further comprises:

- a repository containing information related to the initial requirements of trading parties;
- a repository containing information related to past trading deals; and
- a repository containing information related to the trading parties.

9. (Currently Amended) The system as recited in claim 7, ~~all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference~~, wherein the means for invoking the bilateral negotiations comprises:

- means for agreeing upon a protocol for conducting the standalone negotiations;
- means for exchanging offers as per the agreed upon protocol; and
- means for concluding the standalone negotiations as per the agreed upon protocol.

10. (Currently Amended) The system as recited in claim 9, ~~all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference~~, wherein the means for exchanging offers comprises:

means for receiving offers from the trading parties;

means for evaluating the received offers;

means for generating counter-offers on ~~[[the]]~~ a basis of evaluated offers; and

means for sending counter-offers to the trading parties.

11. (Cancelled).

12. (Currently Amended) A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by said machine to perform a method of trading goods and services in an online market, ~~the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying initial requirements for initiating trading in the online market~~, said method comprising:

specifying, by a user, initial requirements for initiating trading among trading parties in said online market;

executing a multi-party trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user,

wherein the multi-party trading mechanism comprises one of a continuous double auction, a call market, an ascending price auction, a descending price auction, a first price sealed bid auction, a uniform second price auction, and a reverse auction conducted by the user and the trading parties;

selecting a first trading offer from the trading offers of said multi-party trading mechanism;

~~if a first trading offer is not selected~~, invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the multi-party trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties who submitted trading offers;

repeating said executing of said multi-party trading mechanism, and either said selecting

of said trading offers of said multi-party trading mechanism or said invoking said standalone bilateral negotiations to obtain either ~~said~~ attractive and feasible trading ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or said customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations, respectively;

evaluating the attractive and feasible ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or the customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations by ~~[[a]]~~ any of a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, a user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and a user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

concluding trading deals based on ~~[[the]]~~ evaluated attractive and feasible ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or the customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations, whereby said multi-party trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.

13. (Currently Amended) The program storage device as recited in claim 12, ~~all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference~~, wherein the invoking the standalone bilateral negotiations comprises:

agreeing upon a protocol for conducting the standalone negotiations;
exchanging offers as per the agreed upon protocol; and
concluding the standalone negotiations as per the agreed upon protocol.

14. (Currently Amended) The computer program storage device as recited 13, ~~all the limitations of which are incorporated herein by reference~~, wherein the exchanging offers comprises:

receiving offers from the trading parties;
evaluating offers received from the trading parties;
generating counter-offers on ~~[[the]]~~ a basis of evaluated offers; and
sending the generated counter-offers to the trading parties.

15-16. (Cancelled).

17. (Currently Amended) A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by said machine to perform a method of trading goods and services in an online market, the online market comprising a user and a plurality of trading parties, ~~each trading party trying to strike a trading deal with the user, the user specifying initial requirements for initiating trading in the online market,~~ said method comprising:

specifying, by a user, initial requirements for initiating trading among trading parties in said online market;

executing a multi-party trading mechanism to arrive at trading offers, the trading offers being submitted by the trading parties based on the initial requirements of the user,

wherein the multi-party trading mechanism comprises one of a continuous double auction, a call market, an ascending price auction, a descending price auction, a first price sealed bid auction, a uniform second price auction, and a reverse auction conducted by the user and the trading parties;

selecting a first trading offer from the trading offers of said multi-party trading mechanism;

~~if a first trading offer is not selected,~~ invoking standalone bilateral negotiations, which stand apart from the multi-party trading mechanism, to arrive at customized trading offers, the standalone bilateral negotiations being invoked with the trading parties who submitted trading offers, said invoking further comprising:

agreeing upon a protocol for conducting the standalone negotiations;

exchanging offers as per the agreed upon protocol; and

concluding the standalone negotiations as per the agreed upon protocol;

repeating said executing of said multi-party trading mechanism, and either said selecting of said trading offers of said multi-party trading mechanism or said invoking said standalone bilateral negotiations to obtain either ~~said~~ attractive and feasible trading ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or said customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations, respectively;

evaluating the attractive and feasible ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or the customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations by ~~[[a]]~~ any of a utility function based on multiple attributes of a traded good or a traded service, a user-specified weights associated with the traded good or the traded service, and a user-specified costs associated with the multiple attributes of the traded good or the traded service; and

concluding trading deals based on ~~[[the]]~~ evaluated attractive and feasible ~~offer~~ offers from the multi-party trading mechanism or the customized trading offers from the standalone bilateral negotiations, whereby said multi-party trading mechanism and said standalone bilateral negotiations are combined.